

## Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK, EI

SUBJECT: LABOR GOVERNMENT ON NORTHERN IRELAND

1. FOLLOWING A WEEK-END OF EXCEPTIONAL VIOLENCE, THERE HAS BEEN INTENSIVE LABOR GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION. NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY MERLYN REES HAS BEEN CONSULTING WITH ARMY AND NI SECURITY AUTHORITIES. ON APRIL 1, BRIAN FAULKNER MET WITH PRIME MINISTER WILSON AND OPPOSITION LEADERS TO RECEIVE REASSURANCE OF THE MAIN LINES OF BRITISH POLICY. PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE IS EXPECTED TO SEE WILSON - THEIR FIRST MEETING AS PRIME MINISTERS - ON APRIL 5. AND REES IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A MAJOR STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY IN A HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE ON NORTHERN IRELAND ON APRIL 4.

2. TO ANSWER EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN ABOUT THE WEEK-END'S EVENTS, REES MADE A STATEMENT IN COMMONS ON APRIL 1 SAYING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN REVIEWING THE NORTHERN IRELAND SECURITY SITUATION FOR THE PAST FOUR WEEKS AND WAS CONSIDERING HOW BEST TO IMPROVE THE SECURITY SET-UP. REES SAID THAT NO INCREASE IN THE

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NUMBER OF TROOPS COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE SORTS OF

INCIDENTS - MULTIPLE BOMBS AND SHOOTINGS - THAT OCCURRED OVER THE WEEK-END. SOME MEASURES COULD BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE SECURITY IN AREAS SUCH AS TOWN CENTERS (BY BLOCKING OFF VEHICULAR TRAFFIC, SETTING UP AREA SEARCH OPERATIONS, ETC.) BUT THESE CARRIED A HIGH PRICE IN TERMS OF DISRUPTION OF NORMAL COMMERCIAL AND CIVIC LIFE. REES MADE THE POINT THAT IN THE CURRENT SITUATION, IMPROVED SECURITY WAS TO AN EXTENT UP TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY ITSELF, IN COOPERATION WITH THE POLICE. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT FIRMLY SUPPORTED THE SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT.

3. COMMENT: WE EXPECT THAT THE FORTHCOMING ELABORATION OF LABOR GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARDS NORTHERN IRELAND WILL SHOW NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES FROM THAT OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. PRIME MINISTER WILSON AND MERLYN REES ARE BOTH FIRMLY COMMITTED TO A BIPARTISAN POLICY. NEVERTHELESS, REES' COMMONS STATEMENT ON APRIL 4 WILL BE INTERESTING TO SHOW WHAT DIFFERING EMPHASIS THE LABOR PARTY INTENDS TO PLACE ON ITS POLICIES IN DEALING WITH THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION. IT WOULD SEEM LOGICAL FOR LABOR TO EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR INCREASED SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MEASURES TO DEAL WITH COMMUNAL PROBLEMS. WILSON'S MEETING WITH COSGRAVE WILL, SIMILARLY, BE INTERESTING, FOR WILSON MUST TRY TO CONVINCE COSGRAVE OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S GOOD INTENTIONS IN THE LONGER RUN WITH RESPECT TO ALL-IRELAND INSTITUTIONS, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME IMPRESSING ON HIM THE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS AND DELICATE SITUATION HE FACES IN NORTHERN IRELAND. HE WILL HAVE TO INSIST ON SOME REPUBLIC OF IRELAND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE IMPORTANT AREAS OF BORDER SECURITY AND HANDLING OF FUGITIVE OFFENDERS.  
SOHM

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